Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Project

What if the Viaduct was closed during construction?

Why was this study conducted?

The public asked if the time it takes to construct the viaduct and seawall replacement can be shortened and what would be the affect. To answer that question, the project initiated a study to compare how two different construction approaches, ***partially open viaduct*** and ***closed viaduct***, would affect traffic, and cost and construction duration.

What are the findings?

- The ***closed viaduct*** construction approach will cause the most disruption to traffic, with heavy congestion for most of the day and early evening on I-5 and downtown streets, and in the Alaskan Way corridor.

- The ***partially open viaduct*** results in increased congestion during the morning and evening peaks on the downtown arterials, Alaskan Way, as well as I-5.

- The ***closed viaduct*** approach could save between $300 and $500 million and reduce the construction duration by up to 2.5 years.

- Whether the viaduct is ***partially open*** or ***closed*** during construction, the Federal Highway Administration, Washington State Department of Transportation, and the City of Seattle are committed to implementing construction mitigation measures so that mobility is maintained during construction.

- These results reinforce the fact that trying to move the majority of traffic out of the corridor and building a 4-lane surface road is a recipe for gridlock. Also, the 6-lane surface alternative continues to be highly problematic.

What are the potential construction approaches?

Two construction approaches were evaluated, both with some of the Center City Access Strategy components included.

Partially open viaduct: Maintains two-lanes of north-south traffic on the Alaskan Way Viaduct or a parallel detour route during construction.

Closed viaduct: Closes viaduct to traffic, which is diverted to I-5 and downtown streets.

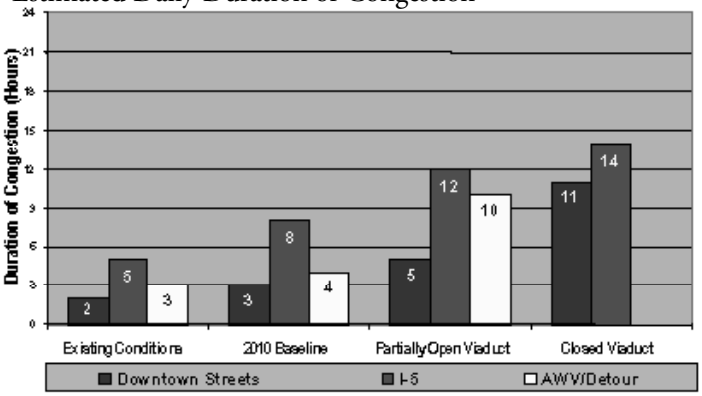
Washington State Department of Transportation
City of Seattle
U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

How will the construction approach affect traffic?

Downtown streets, I-5, and SR 99 will experience increased congestion, no matter which construction approach is selected.

Traffic management and priority measures for drivers, freight, and transit will be in place before construction begins.

Estimated Daily Duration of Congestion



How will management and mitigation strategies affect traffic during construction?

Components of the Center City Access Strategy will keep drivers, freight, and transit moving. Those projects, in combination with traffic management programs, will help maintain access to downtown, while helping freight and transit move through congested conditions. However they do not provide additional capacity or alleviate constraints on I-5 or downtown streets.

Will transit service alleviate congestion during construction?

Provision of reliable transit service will be necessary to maintain access to and mobility within the downtown area. The number of cars traveling to or through downtown will be limited by congestion and capacity constraints on I-5 and downtown streets. However, transit can efficiently move more people. 62% of commuters to downtown could use transit by 2010 (compared to 44% today). Ensuring efficient and reliable transit is available will be critical.

What will be done next?

This study was conducted to answer the public's question. However, a decision on construction approach will not be made until after the preferred alternative is selected and more engineering work is done. The project will also develop specific measures to mitigate traffic and freight impacts and maintain reliable transit service. Continued outreach to businesses, freight, and the public will be also an important component of developing the construction approach.

To read the full ***Assessment of AWV Construction Approaches: Partially Open Viaduct and Closed Viaduct Study***, visit the project website at www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/viaduct.